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PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST'S VIEWPOINT.

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REVIEWED FROM A SOCIAL SCIENTIST'S VIEWPOINT IS THE EFFECT OF THE SUPREME COURT'S 1954 BROWN DECISION ON PATTERNS OF DEFACTO SEGREGATION IN NORTHERN COMMUNITIES. THE DECISION HAD PROFOUND EFFECTS ON DE FACTO SEGREGATION, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE DEMOCRATIC IDEALS OF EQUALITY AND TO THE DAMAGED SELF-IMAGE CREATED BY SEGREGATED SCHOOLS. IT POINTED THE WAY TO AN INVESTIGATION OF WHETHER OR NOT NORTHERN SCHOOL PATTERNS HAD THE SAME DETRIMENTAL EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS AS THOSE FOUND IN SOUTHERN SCHOOLS PREVIOUSLY SEGREGATED BY LAW. THE FINDING THAT SUCH EFFECTS DID EXIST LED TO POLITICAL PRESSURES FOR REMEDIAL ACTION AND TO FURTHER STUDY AND ACTION BY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND EDUCATORS. THE NEW YORK CITY HIGHER HORIZONS PROGRAM WAS A FIRST STEP TOWARD THE DESIGN OF A PROGRAM TO INCREASE THE MOTIVATION, STANDARDS, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF MINORITY GROUP CHILDREN IN PREDOMINANTLY SEGREGATED SCHOOLS. FINDINGS FROM THIS PROJECT HAVE SHOWN THAT SUCH ENRICHMENT AND REMEDIATION, COUPLED WITH OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICIES, MUST BE MORE WIDELY INCORPORATED INTO THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. ALTHOUGH RESEARCH IS STILL NEEDED ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VERY EXISTENCE OF RACIALLY HOMOGENEOUS SCHOOLS HAS DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS ON TEACHER MORALE, CHILDREN'S SELF IMAGE, AND PARENTAL ATTITUDES, PROGRAMS MUST BE DEVELOPED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN GETTING AN INTEGRATED EDUCATION. ADDITIONALLY, LITIGATION MAY STILL HAVE TO BE USED TO CONTEST DE FACTO SEGREGATION. ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN PROCEEDINGS OF AN INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NORTHERN SCHOOL DESEGREGATION--PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS, P. 24-30. (NH)

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Chairman:

As all of you know, Dr. Kenneth B. Clark is Professor of Psychology of the University of the City of New York, and in this whole field of endeavor relative to desegregation and integration, I think if any one man can be said to have spearheaded discussion and action on this subject in the City of New York and in many parts of the country, that man is Dr. Clark. It is my pleasure to introduce him to you now to speak on the topic "Progress and Problems from the Social Scientist's Viewpoint".

PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST'S VIEWPOINT

Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, Professor of Psychology
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It is ironic that the recent concern with the problems of Northern school desegregation emerged directly from the litigation which sought to eliminate legally enforced segregation in the public schools of southern and border states. When the lawyers of the NAACP decided in 1950 to challenge the Plessy vs. Ferguson "separate but equal" doctrine as applied to public education, they also decided to include in their legal attack on this doctrine the findings and testimony of social scientists in the attempt to convince the Federal courts that segregated education in itself was inferior and that equality was impossible with the fact of segregation.

The role of the social scientists in these public school desegregation cases was to demonstrate by their testimony, based upon the best available theory and findings, that segregated schools resulted in or was inevitably associated with educational and psychological damage to the Negro children who were required to attend such schools.

In addition to the general problems of the inequality of these segregated schools and their obvious inferiority in educational standards, facilities, plant, curriculum and equipment which, understandably, resulted in a marked retardation in the academic achievement of the children attending such schools, the nuclear psychological factor which appeared to

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dominate the total pattern of educational detriment associated with segregated schools was the factor of a deep and pervasive damage to the self-esteem of these children who were rejected and isolated in racially segregated schools. The United States Supreme Court in the Brown decision of May 17th, 1954 underscored the human, educational and legal significance of this damage to the self-esteem when it stated "to separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." The Court then concluded "we conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal".

This is not the appropriate time or place to reopen the arguments concerning whether the Court did or did not rely upon social science rather than law in arriving at this important decision. Nor is it relevant at this time to discuss the significance, the validity or objectivity of those social scientists who worked so closely with the lawyers of the NAACP at the trial and appellate level of these cases. The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of this decision on the patterns of de facto segregation in northern communities. In pursuing this purpose, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the Brown decision specifically involved only those 17 states and the District of Columbia which had laws requiring or permitting racial segregation in public education. This decision did not deal directly with the problem of de facto segregation in northern communities. In fact, on the day following the Court's decision, a newspaper in a medium size northern urban community had a first page headline which simply stated "Decision does not mean us". The psychological significance of the guilt, anxiety and wish betrayed by this headline is obvious. What was not so obvious at the time was its inaccurate prophecy.

Two factors seem crucial in understanding how the Brown decision brought about re-examination of and changes in the patterns of de facto segregation in northern urban communities. First of these is the clarity and scope of the language of the Brown decision itself. Aside from pinpointing the damage to self-esteem which resulted from segregated education, the Court also discussed in most eloquent terms the significant functions of public education in preparing human beings for a successful and creative life in a Democracy. In highlighting this crucial role of education and

demonstrating also the way in which segregated education impairs one's ability and motivation to learn, the Court stimulated serious thought about the effects of all types of segregated education on human beings - whether it be legal or de facto. It should be pointed out, however, that the Brown decision quoted a finding in the Kansas case which included the statement, "The impact is greater when it has the sanctions of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group". Certainly, the use of the comparative "greater" in the first part of that sentence suggests that segregation without the sanction of the law also has similar detrimental effects.

A second fact which must be recognized as having had some effect in calling attention to problems of de facto segregation in the North is the fact that many of the social scientists who worked with the lawyers of the NAACP in these school desegregation cases were from the North and were required to evaluate the conditions in their own communities, in the light of the testimony which they were giving about the effects of segregation in southern communities. For example, it was not possible to state that the patterns of public school segregation in South Caroline and Virginia had certain detrimental effects on those Negro children without being concerned about the possibility that Negro children attending segregated schools in Harlem were also being damaged by their segregated schools. In fact, one of the lawyers of the State of Virginia made it a point in cross-examining the social science expert witnesses on the side of the NAACP specifically on this issue. It was imperative, therefore, that the social scientists determine whether the effects of de facto segregation were different from, similar to, or identical with the effects of legally enforced public school segregation. A systematic examination of this problem in the New York City public schools revealed that the same pattern of educational and psychological detriment found among children attending legally segregated schools is found among Negro children attending de facto segregated schools in New York City. Negro children in New York City also had low self-esteem, low motivation and were severely retarded in academic achievement. These findings can be duplicated in every large urban community in which there are de facto segregated schools. The consistency of this finding required both remedial action on the part of concerned members of the community and further intensive and systematic study and action on the part of social scientists and educators.

Initially, the attack on the problem of de facto

segregated schools in the North took the form of concentrated pressure on school boards and other political authorities in an attempt to get them to adopt policies and procedures which would decrease the number of existing segregated schools and prevent the development of new segregated schools. Developments in New York City within the past five years provide the best illustration of the partial effectiveness of this voluntary negotiation approach to the solution of this problem.

The Board of Education of the City of New York, as early as 1954, established a Commission on Integration to guide the Board and its professional staff in a systematic program of public school desegregation. The specific contributions of the program developed by the New York City Board of Education have become major guideposts to other northern communities who seek a solution to this complex problem with good faith. An analysis of the overall New York City program reveals that it can be broken down into two main parts. First, a program designed to increase the motivation and academic achievement of students in predominantly Negro schools. The Junior High School 43 Project and its successor, the Higher Horizons Program, are the products of this aspect of New York City's attack on this larger problem. The rationale of the Higher Horizons Program reflects the reality that the overwhelming majority of the children attending the public schools in the central city are at present minority group children. It follows, therefore, that an increasing proportion of the public schools will consist of minority group children if the population patterns continue the trend of the last fifteen years or so. The fact of predominantly minority group schools may therefore be one of the facts of urban life for the foreseeable future, unless the flight of middle class white groups to the suburbs can somehow be stemmed and reversed. Given this fact, therefore, it is imperative that some effective program designed to raise the educational standards, increase the motivation and the academic achievement of these children be developed and implemented.

The Higher Horizons Program pioneered by New York City is a first step in that direction. It must be intensified. The people of the City of New York must be made to recognize what a tremendously important and imperative demonstration of social engineering this program can be. The next step is for the Higher Horizons Program to be made an integral part of the general educational process in our public schools. In order to do this, it will be necessary to move this program beyond its present pilot, experimental, demonstration stage. The findings which are now available prove conclusively that

with adequate stimulation, supervision and, above all, education these children can learn and can achieve in spite of poor homes and depressed community problems. There is no further need for continued experiments or demonstration projects. These findings must be translated into the normal day to day educational process. To do so, at least the following requirements must be met:

1) There must be adequate financing of our public schools which will make possible manageable class size, adequate facilities, books, educational materials, and competent teaching.

2) There must be competent supervision of the educational process.

3) There must be some system of accountability whereby teachers are evaluated and promoted on the basis of the academic performance of their students on standardized achievement tests.

When these and other standards essential for an effective educational process are instituted and enforced, the problem of an adequate education of minority group children in northern urban centers will be well on its way toward a successful and democratic solution.

There remains, however, the gnawing and disturbing question of whether even the best de facto segregated school with the highest educational standards and procedures can be an effective instrument in preparing American children for the world of tomorrow. This is essentially a complex social science question with many facets. To what extent does the very fact of the racially homogeneous school, consisting of children from lower status groups, inevitably lower the morale of their teachers, the self-esteem of the children, and the over-all perspective of their parents? This aspect of the problem has not yet been systematically examined by social scientists. It is imperative that future research obtain answers to these complex questions: In the meantime, it is necsary to develop programs designed to increase the number of children who have the opportunity for an education in non-segregated - racially heterogeneous schools.

The second aspect of the New York City program, the Open Enrollment Program, directs itself to the solution of this problem. The Open Enrollment Program is an important guidepost to a partial resolution of the problem of increasing

the number of non-segregated schools in northern urban centers. The readiness of other urban areas to accept this model may be used as an index of the amount of good faith which is involved in their attempts at solving this aspect of the problem. It may be suggested, in spite of Mr. Conant's disagreement, that any Higher Horizons type program or Great Cities Program which does not include the Open Enrollment phase could be interpreted as an acceptance of the inevitability of segregated schools, if not as a contemporary version of continued gerrymandering, which means increasing and perpetuating such schools.

A most recent and significant development in the attack on the problem of segregated schools in the North has been the approach through the Courts. A number of years ago, Justice Justine Wise Polier handed down a decision which, in effect, stated that a Board of Education could not require Negro parents to send their children to segregated schools. This decision was not appealed and therefore did not reach the Federal Courts. Within the past year, Federal Judge Kaufman handed down the decision in the New Rochelle case which established the relevance of the Brown decision to the problem of de facto segregated schools in northern communities. The Kaufman decision must be recognized as an important bridge between the litigation dealing with the southern public school cases and the problem of northern de facto segregated schools. Robert L. Carter, Chief Counsel of the NAACP, is now developing the legal rationale and approach to a series of cases which will be brought before the Federal Courts attacking the problem of de facto segregation in northern urban communities. The first of these cases which will be presented to the Federal Courts, if necessary, is that dealing with segregated schools in Orange, New Jersey.

It would have been hoped that northern communities would not require a procedure of litigation in the attempt to resolve the problems of segregated schools. Indeed, some northern communities have voluntarily sought effective resolution of these problems without litigation. It is significant for the social scientists, however, and probably should be a subject of systematic research that a number of northern communities show the same patterns, intransigence, evasiveness, and double talk found when a southern community is confronted with the demands for the desegregation of their public schools. An additional and more difficult factor is found in the North, namely, the factor of self righteous denial of intentional segregation or prejudice. This argument is usually supported by the fact of the absence of laws requiring school segregation, but

is contradicted by a history of gerrymandering or school site selection which leads inevitably to segregated schools; and it is further contradicted by the adamance with which attempts at the desegregation of these schools are resisted.

In conclusion, one might interpret the available evidence in regard to northern school desegregation as supporting both optimism based upon examples of real progress, and continued caution based upon the many examples of deep and persistent resistence. It continues to be the role of the social scientist to make available his findings and data toward the end of an effective, democratic and just resolution of these problems. Social scientists have the additional and parallel role of attempting to analyze and understand and hopefully reduce the persistent and subtle forms of resistence which seem so pervasive in the North.